

HAMPTON VA

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Robin McCormick | rmccormick@hampton.gov | 757-728-3276
22 Lincoln Street | Hampton, VA 23669

Council approves funeral home, postpones vote on rental inspections

Sept. 12, 2013 - Three controversial measures drew a standing room-only crowd to City Council's evening meeting - a rezoning for a funeral home on Big Bethel Road, a bed and breakfast on a boat, and a proposal for rental inspections in targeted areas of the city. The meeting adjourned at 11:22 p.m.

On a narrow 4-3 vote, TR Development received approval to build a funeral home with a 300-seat chapel at 978 Big Bethel Road. The original plan called for a larger chapel and a crematorium (now removed from the project). Michael Sweeney, lawyer for TR Development, noted that the company had "listened to the concerns of the Planning Department, the Planning Commission and the community."

Still, several residents spoke against the project, chiefly citing concerns about traffic and flooding. The Northampton Civic League also opposed the project. Beverlee Engle described the Big Bethel area as "the last little piece of country in Hampton." Some residents, including those directly behind the site and other community members, spoke in support. Pam Pittman noted that they preferred a funeral home to a 24-hour gas station or fast-food restaurant, which would not need rezoning or approvals to locate at the site.

The majority of City Council cited the need to support and encourage local business and the willingness the owners showed to adjust the scope of the project based on neighborhood concerns.

A proposal for a floating bed and breakfast at Joy's Marina, 424 E. Queen St., was approved 5-1 with one abstention. The 100-foot boat would occupy two of the existing 62 boat slips, with up to four staterooms that would rent for \$200-\$300 a night. Owner Archie Allen said his operation would be the first in Virginia, but similar boat B&Bs exist in Baltimore and Annapolis.

A proposal to create a rental dwelling inspection ordinance was deferred until the October meeting. During an earlier presentation in the afternoon session, Steve Shapiro, deputy director in Community Development, said the proposal is designed to improve the health, safety and welfare of our citizens and increase the resale value of our housing stock.

Neighborhoods were recommended for the program based on age of dwellings, exterior code violations, percentage of rental homes, and crime statistics.

The neighborhoods are: Holly Homes and Fordham (in the Buckroe area); South Phoebus; Sussex; Old Hampton; Shell Road and South Wythe; Old North Hampton and Langley; and Hampton Club and Magruder Heights.

Residents of Sussex and Old North Hampton and Rosalee Gardens spoke in favor of the ordinance. Adam Coleman, who described himself as a "regular guy" said that "whether you are a homeowner or a landlord, everybody benefits from efforts to stabilize property values."

Some realtors and property owners asked for more time to study the ordinance, and some opposed the measure outright. Council agreed to defer the measure until Oct. 23.

Council unanimously approved changes to the comprehensive plan that would offer guidelines on how the city can reduce its share of publicly-supported housing to its "fair share" in the region. No one from the public spoke on the measure, which was endorsed last week by the [Planning Commission](#).

In the afternoon session, Council heard a report from a committee that recommends changing the method of electing school board members. Read the [news release](#).

###